

Unemployment Continuance Act

I am rather surprised at the minister when he says he has not heard of any complaints. If he had read the Chronicle as much as he professes he would have seen a number of letters from men all over the province complaining very bitterly of the fact that they were deprived of work because of their politics.

Mr. SHORT: That was not on public works; that was on highways.

Mr. RALSTON: I remember distinctly a letter from a shore fisherman at Arichat, a man with twelve children, who complained that he was told "You want relief work now. You were so smart; you voted against us and prevented your women from coming to the polls in my car." That was in the constituency of my hon. friend the Minister of Finance, and that letter appeared in the Chronicle. It is rather extraordinary that it escaped my hon. friend's attention.

I am not concerned with the matter of the Chronicle; I am concerned with the fact that in this constituency there are these instances coming to my attention of people who did not need unemployment relief half as much as their neighbours needed it, but who got that relief while others were deprived of it. The ministry can do as they like about it, but I ask them to investigate that condition, I say to the Minister of Finance that the only suggestion I have heard of any investigation made by Mr. Spicer was one instance, in which the best he could say was that all the men employed on the work were those who previously had been unemployed. That has nothing to do with the case. There are many men worth millions who are unemployed, but that does not entitle them to unemployment relief money. My point is that those most in need were not getting the work, and that aspect of the case does not seem to have been met. My hon. friend says he has looked into the matter; I appreciate that. But since he did look into the matter he might have given me the benefit of Mr. Spicer's report in connection with it. This is the first I have heard of his having made a report. I am appealing once more to the ministry, and if it is the Minister of Public Works I am delighted to take his assurance, because I understood it was the Minister of Labour who had to do with furnishing the work. I understood that the Minister of Public Works was the one actually doing the job, the mechanic, if I might put it that way with deference, although the people to be selected were necessarily the wards of the Department of Labour. That, I should think, would be the chain of responsibility. If the Minister of Public

[Mr. Ralston.]

Works will look into the matter I am perfectly satisfied that his investigation will be a fair one. Will the ministry give me that assurance, that they will look into these various cases to which I have referred? Surely I am not going to be expected to bring affidavits when I give specific instances in the constituencies. When I point out that there is this complaint, surely the ministry of its own motion will make investigation without anything further. I do not have to come and prove the case here. I am not acting as prosecutor at all; I am simply bringing the matter to the attention of the ministry and asking them to investigate it.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): So far as I recall, my hon. friend has not disclosed the names of the places where this work has been done. If he will give the names of the places and write a letter giving the substance of the complaint I will see that the matter is investigated.

Progress reported.

At six o'clock the house adjourned without question put, pursuant to standing order.

Thursday, March 31, 1932

The house met at three o'clock.

BANKING AND COMMERCE

Mr. R. C. MATTHEWS (Toronto East Centre) presented the third report of the select standing committee on banking and commerce.

Mr. MATTHEWS moved that the report be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

CANADIAN MERCHANT MARINE

Hon. R. J. MANION (Minister of Railways and Canals): Mr. Speaker, I desire to lay on the table of the house parliamentary return, reference 218, in answer to a motion by Mr. Laffèche concerning the Canadian Merchant Marine. May I add that it is possible there may be supplementary information, because upon investigation I find the question is somewhat indefinite.

QUESTIONS

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk).